DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 305 973 JC 890 198

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TITLE Back to the Future: Thirty Years of Developmental Education.
PUB DATE 8 Oct 88
NOTE 16p.; Keynote address presented at the Kansas/Nebraska Regional Western College Reading and Learning Association Meeting (Grand Island, NE, October 8, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Role; Community Colleges; *Developmental Studies Programs; *Educational Change; Educational Technology; Educational Trends; Interdisciplinary Approach; Remedial Instruction; *Remedial Programs; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

Drawing from the literature of the 1950s and more recently published articles from the 1980s, this essay attempts to analyze the extent to which the field of developmental education has changed and/or remained the same over the past 30 years. Comparisons are drawn with respect to the following: (1) the cognitive and affective scope of developmental education; (2) interdisciplinary and integrated approaches to basic skills instruction; (3) recognition of individual differences among students; (4) use of educational technologies; (5) appropriate criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of developmental education; (6) the number of developmental programs and services; and (7) changing demands of developmental programs. The paper concludes that several aspects of developmental education have not changed perceptibly in the past 30 years, including the emphasis on the student as a whole, the integration of programs across disciplines, and the individualization of services to specific students. Highlighted changes include advances in educational technology, though the paper notes that the trend toward the use of available technologies was evident in the 1950s; more sophisticated evaluation criteria and methodologies; significant increases in the number of community colleges providing a full range of developmental services; and the modification of the scope of these services in response to fiscal and political conditions. (ALB)

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ED305973

Back to the Future: Thirty Years of Developmental Education

Keynote Address presented at the
Kansas/Nebraska Regional Western College
Reading and Learning Assoication
Meeting
by Gwyn Enright

Grand Island, Nebraska
October 1988

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BACK TO THE FUTURE: THIRTY YEARS OF DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

Gwyn Enright

San Diego City College

We have spent yesterday afternoon, last night, and this morning paying tribute to three decades of developmental education. When Judi Haney invited me to present the luncheon address for your fall conference, she said the conference theme was, "Back to the Future: Thirty Years of Developmental Education." In the movie, Back to the Future, the time machine transporting the young hero to an earlier decade was a marvelous, silver Delorian. If, by some magic, we could all climb into that low, streamlined sportscar and travel for a professional site visit to 1958, what would we find there? How much of our field has changed in thirty years? How much has stayed the same? Have we, as the Virginia Slims ad says, "come a long way"?

After we arrive and enjoy a much needed stretch, our colleagues in very narrow, calf length skirts are quick to inform us of their concern with the "whole" student. Unlike past courses or workshops which treated the students' study problems as isolated skill deficiencies, the "current" approach, we are told, is to integrate reading, writing, listening and speaking skills into "fusion courses"(Blake, 1955; Gregory 1958). Interdepartmental communications classes are being offered; some use a team teaching approach. Our colleagues share with us their view that these

multi-faceted programs ought to be administered by a multidisciplinary committee, not by one particular department. But the most important new characteristic of the study improvement efforts is attention, not just to students' skills, but also to students' personalities. Thus, both the cognitive and the affective domains are emphasized: the student is treated as a whole person.

This humanistic view of learning is credited to Carl Rogers, who published Client Centered Therapy in 1951 and On Becoming a Person in 1961.

To us, this approach sounds familiar. Roueche (1985) identified 11 elements of successful programs from a 1982 University of Texas national survey, which included over 1200 institutions claiming to offer developmental classes or services. One element characteristic of programs with 50% or better retention is the monitoring of student behavior. Behavior means tardiness, school absences, missed assignments. In other words, not just reading score gains. A 1986 paper titled, "Strategies for Maintaining Excellent Developmental Programs in the 80s" discusses the revisions that funding limitations necessitated in the Rockland Community College developmental education program. Those changes included increasing class size and expanding paraprofessional responsibilities, but the general approach remained the same and that approach would sound about right to our new friends from 1958:

> ...we determined that we needed a total programmatic approach. That is: (1) an integrated, holistic curriculum which is

competency based, (2) assessment and advisement, (3) homogeneity of groups based on skill competency levels, (4) individualized instruction and learning contracts, (5) a range of multi-media systems, (6) formal support counseling groups,(7) referral counseling, and (8) tutoring.

(Martin, 1986)

In Boylan's 1983 review of 51 developmental programs, he concludes that "programs which showed the greatest gain scores, GPA improvement, and retention also tended to be comprehensive in scope, mission, and services" (p.32) Comprehensive means the program offers more than skills courses. A comprehensive program includes counseling, tutoring, learning assistance and basic skills, according to Boylan. In other words, it is designed with the whole student in mind.

Our Sputnik-era colleagues are pleased to learn about the interdisciplinary emphasis of the writing across the curriculum movement and the proliferation of adjunct classes. They applaud our offering packaged classes, in which skills instruction is coupled with a content area course for a specific group of students. In the 1985 Western College Reading and Learning Association Journal, Denman describes such a program in an article called, "The High Risk Student and the Integrated Course." "Interfacing with subsequent courses" is also one of Roueche's 11 elements of success derived from the University of Texas survey and is a generally accepted goal as indicated by all our efforts today to link our instruction more closely to the regular college curriculum so our students will apply their new academic skills to their content classes more readily. Our colleagues would also nod

knowingly as we explain the recent trend to bring together reading and writing. Our work in bringing reading and writing together, most recently investigated in a study reported by Lewis and Carter-Wells in the 1987 JCRL, echoes this 1958 impulse to integrate.

Besides recognizing the cognitive and affective requirements of students working in multidisciplinary programs to improve their study habits, our colleagues from 1958 acknowledge the individual differences inherent in the students they serve. Developmental programs are "tailored to the specific needs of students" thanks to the introduction of programmed materials by Spache and his colleagues at the University of Florida (Spache et.al., 1959) and the introduction of individualized, self-instructional materials by Raygor at the University of Minnesota (Raygor and Summers, 1963). So, while the humanist theories contributed to integrating the developmental programs to reflect the view of the student as a whole human being, the Skinnerian behaviorist theories materialized in programmed instruction (Maxwell, 1979). These "modern materials" were used as part of a sequence consisting of (1) diagnosis, (2) an intake or counseling interview, (3) prescribed, programmed self-instruction, and (4) evaluation.

During our visit, not only are we privy to programmed materials used in concert with a diagnostic/prescriptive methodology as in learning centers today, but also we witness a promising technology: instructional television. A 1958 article in School and Society reports on "TV Retention and Learning" at the State University of Iowa.

We smile smugly. Then we explain how computer assisted instruction uses the very same principles of programmed instruction. We are just about to boast of our superior technological advances in education, when one of us cites the October 5, 1988 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education in which Turner emphasizes the irrelevance of debating one technology versus another technology. The author points to one study in which computers compared to books resulted in students' learning more. Then, she points to a second study in which books resulted in better learning than computers. The conclusion, of course is that the content and not the medium is important. Additional published articles also dampen our enthusiasm. In their article, "Microcomputers and College Learning: A Look at the Future," Patterson and Gregory (1984) report a 1980 study in which 77% of the available language arts software consisted of drills of isolated skills. More recently, Caverly and Tessmer (1987) pose the question: "What can be done to improve the quality of computer assisted tutorials for college level students?" The answer is for instructors to create their own!

Technological advances in CAI seem too premature support our claims that much has changed in the areas of materials and technology since 1958. We continue to smile, but we don't say a word.

A site visit certainly includes a review of relevant documents. And we find a 1956 article from the Journal of Experimental

Education calling for the evaluation of developmental programs. The title is, "Do Probationary College Freshman Benefit from Compulsory Study Skills and Reading Training?" (Blake) We are surprised to learn that as early as 1950, Robinson suggested academic performance as the appropriate criteria to validate remedial courses (Robinson in Kulik, Kulik, and Shwalb, 1983). Still, asking whether a program is effective was not a common question in 1958. It was not until 1965 that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act established the connection between program evaluation and funding. Today articles in the professional literature have titles like "Is Developmental Education Working?" (Boylan, 1983) "Are Developmental Programs at the College Level doing their job?" (Miller, 1980) "Factors Influencing Retention in a Developmental Studies Program" (Gallini, Campbell & Hatch, 1986). Nearly every developmental studies program today has an evaluation component and, while we once evaluated our programs only by counting, now we employ sophisticated statistical techniques. While we once included every measurement criteria we could think of (better safe than sorry, we reasoned), we have accepted improved GPA and improved retention following completion of a developmental studies program as the logical criteria by which to measure the effectiveness of developmental skills programs.

According to Boylan, studies in the 1980s use more control groups, more sophisticated statistical treatments, and more sophisticated evaluation criteria. Ratings of student satisfaction are employed less often and assessment of gain scores and retention data are

employed more often. According to a 1986 survey by the Southern Regional Education Board, even though most remedial developmental programs still rely only on student evaluations, one third regularly conduct follow-up studies of the academic success of students completing developmental programs, (Abraham, 1987).

Today, not only do we evaluate our programs much more skillfully, but we are able to show developmental education programs benefit students. In fact, after one semester in a developmental class, an individual might even earn higher grades and be able to take more units than a student who did not have to take the developmental skills class, but who was placed directly into the baccalaureate level class (Boggs, 1985; Boylan, 1983). In a meta-analysis of 60 evaluation studies, Kulik, Kulik, and Shwalb (1983) conclude special programs have a positive, albeit small, effect on GPA and on persistence.

In evaluation, we have come a long way.

Another change over the past thirty years is the number of developmental programs and services. In the national survey, I conducted with Devirian and Smith, of 760 institutions, only 9% indicated a learning center or learning skills program existed on their campuses before 1960 (Smith, Enright and Devirian, 1975). By 1982, only 160 out of 1452 institutions of higher education reported <u>not</u> having developmental studies programs or services. Today, 80% of all colleges and universities offer special programs

for underprepared students (Wright and Cahalan, 1985).

But, in 1985, our colleagues are concerned about being able to serve all the students they expect to enter their doors. Life Magazine has just run an article warning about the flood of students threatening to inundate American colleges and universities. Because the colleges were accepting nearly all students, even those who were not college material, the dropout rate reported in the article was as high as 15%. Our friends driving the large cars with tail fins had no anticipation of the Civil Rights Movement, of the disappointment following the idealism of the Open Door policies, of the trendiness of "excellence." They had not read Cross's work in identifying the new student nor all the periodic reidentifying that followed. In fact, the September 1988 issue of the Journal of Developmental Education includes yet another article identifying the characteristics of the developmental student (Hardin, 1988).

As we continue to accommodate, to take care of business, the character of our clients - those who need extra help in college - will probably change again. While we once considered English As A Second language programs outside the scope of our purview, we will dedicate ourselves to serving our recent immigrants from Southeast Asia and South and Central America. Our trip has shown us that while our students may be described in different terms from decade to decade as we respond to the fiscal and political realities of our times, the meaning - the original meaning - of

developmental education and learning assistance remains the same. Clowes defines developmental education as that which doesn't remedy or heal or make-up for student deficiencies, but which helps the student become all that he or she can become. Christ (1971) defines learning assistance as using all possible resources to help students learn more in less time with greater ease and confidence. We keep these meanings in mind as we prepare to go back to the future.

Our visit to 1958 ends on an upbeat note. We concede that while some ideas and practices haven't changed in 30 years, we have assimilated what we all agree is worthwhile: treating the student as a whole; integrating programs across disciplines; individualizing treatments for specific students.

Before we squeeze back into the Delorian, we have a nice lunch with our friends from 1958. They are amused when we try to order water from France and sundried tomatoes for our salads. They express sadness at the loss of Elvis Presley, who has just left for Germany to serve in the army. Imagine their delight when we tell them that, in 1988, according to recent reports from all over the country, Elvis is alive, still.

Thank you and have a safe trip back.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

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